

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
McALLEN DIVISION

LIZELLE GONZALEZ	) (	
Plaintiff	) (	
	) (	
VS.	) (	CIVIL ACTION NO.
	) (	7:24-cv-00132
GOCHA ALLEN RAMIREZ,	) (	
ALEXANDRIA LYNN BARRERA,	) (	
RENE FUENTES, and STARR	) (	
COUNTY, TEXAS	) (	
Defendants	) (	

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ORAL AND VIDEOTAPED DEPOSITION OF  
RENE FUENTES  
JUNE 12, 2025

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ORAL AND VIDEOTAPED DEPOSITION OF RENE FUENTES,  
produced as a witness at the instance of the PLAINTIFF,  
taken in the above-styled and numbered cause on  
JUNE 12, 2025, between the hours of 10:10 a.m. and  
1:14 p.m., reported stenographically by DONNA McCOWN,  
Certified Court Reporter No. 6625, in and for the State  
of Texas, at Denton Navarro Rodriguez Bernal  
Santee & Zech, PC, 701 East Harrison, Suite 100,  
Harlingen, Texas, pursuant to the Federal Rules of  
Civil Procedure and any provisions stated on the  
record or attached therein.

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11:39 1 ordinary? How did you --

11:39 2 A. We take every case as very important. Anybody  
11:39 3 that calls to -- they want to make a report, we have to  
11:39 4 go and investigate.

11:39 5 Q. Okay. And -- and that's -- I mean, that's the  
11:39 6 prudent thing to do, correct, is to investigate a call?

11:39 7 A. It is, correct.

11:39 8 Q. Okay. What happens when you investigate a call  
11:39 9 and it turns out to be false or no law was broken?

11:39 10 A. We still have to make a report, and we still  
11:39 11 have to investigate, document everything and have it on  
11:39 12 file.

11:39 13 Q. Okay. So if the sheriff's department makes a  
11:39 14 determination that no crime has been committed, you  
11:39 15 make a report, keep it in the file. Do you take that  
11:39 16 to the DA's office?

11:39 17 A. Before they make the decision, they have to  
11:40 18 contact the county attorney or the DA's -- or the DA on  
11:40 19 their findings.

11:40 20 Q. Okay. So regardless if it's clear that there  
11:40 21 is no -- no crime, they contact the DA's office, and  
11:40 22 the DA's office will tell them yes or no on a felony?

11:40 23 A. Just to confirm.

11:40 24 Q. Okay. In the investigation of Lizelle, was it  
11:40 25 apparent to anyone at the sheriff's office that she did

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12:11 1 happened during the day or calls.

12:11 2 And then the next morning, the night  
12:12 3 sergeant, he texts me about 7:00 in the morning, 6:00  
12:12 4 in the morning, 7:00 in the morning.

12:12 5 Q. Okay. So tell me how many different groups are  
12:12 6 you a part of with regard to the text messaging?

12:12 7 A. I'm usually with the -- with the  
12:12 8 administration.

12:12 9 Q. Okay. And the administration would be  
12:12 10 captains, lieutenants, sergeants?

12:12 11 A. From the corporal -- from the corporal --

12:12 12 Q. Corporal up?

12:12 13 A. -- above.

12:12 14 Q. Okay. That's a new one for me. So who is the  
12:12 15 corporal? Where --

12:12 16 A. Oh, I'm sorry. It's under sergeant. It's not  
12:12 17 a sergeant but --

12:12 18 Q. Okay.

12:12 19 A. -- his next step would be sergeant.

12:12 20 Q. Okay. Other than Lizelle Herrera, have you  
12:12 21 ever heard of anyone arrested for having an abortion?

12:13 22 A. No.

12:13 23 Q. How many investigations have you or your office  
12:13 24 conducted that were related to pregnancy or pregnancy  
12:13 25 outcomes?

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12:13 1 A. Don't know.

12:13 2 Q. Can you think of any other than Lizelle?

12:13 3 A. No, ma'am.

12:13 4 Q. Same question, but specifically with regard to  
12:13 5 abortions. How many investigations have you or your  
12:13 6 office conducted regarding abortions?

12:13 7 A. Don't know.

12:13 8 Q. Do you think there are more than -- than  
12:13 9 Lizelle, or do you think she's the only one?

12:13 10 A. I'm sorry?

12:13 11 Q. Do you think there are more -- there were more  
12:13 12 investigations other than Lizelle?

12:13 13 A. I don't know.

12:13 14 Q. How many investigations have you or your office  
12:13 15 conducted where you obtained medical records?

12:13 16 A. Me?

12:13 17 Q. Or the sheriff's office. How often is it  
12:13 18 that -- that your investigators obtain medical records?

12:13 19 A. Don't know, Miss.

12:14 20 Q. Is it more often than not or not too often?

12:14 21 A. I don't want to guess.

12:14 22 Q. Okay. I appreciate that.

12:14 23 How many investigations have you or the  
12:14 24 sheriff's office conducted where the initial report of  
12:14 25 a crime came from a hospital or hospital employee?

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12:15 1 A. Okay. Can you repeat, please, ma'am?

12:15 2 Q. Of course. Are you aware that the sheriff's  
12:15 3 office can only investigate something if it's a crime?

12:15 4 A. But we do all reports. Anybody goes to the  
12:15 5 office that wants to make a report, so we have to -- we  
12:15 6 have to document everything.

12:15 7 Q. Let me ask you, Sheriff, what is the purpose of  
12:15 8 an investigation? What -- what -- why do you do them?  
12:15 9 I know it's kind of a simple question -- it sounds like  
12:15 10 a simple question, but, you know, what -- with  
12:15 11 someone -- like for somebody on the jury that may not  
12:16 12 have any clue how law enforcement works, when you get a  
12:16 13 call or a report, you investigate. What is the purpose  
12:16 14 of your investigation?

12:16 15 A. If somebody complains of a crime, so we have to  
12:16 16 investigate. We have to talk to people, witnesses,  
12:16 17 pick up evidence. You see if it's a crime. If there's  
12:16 18 enough evidence, we file charges.

12:16 19 Q. Okay. Does the sheriff's office ever provide  
12:16 20 guidance to hospital staff about when they should  
12:16 21 report crimes?

12:16 22 A. No, ma'am.

12:16 23 Q. Okay. Do you know how the hospital receives  
12:16 24 guidance or training on -- on their reporting duties?

12:16 25 A. No, ma'am.

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12:17 1 Q. Okay. Do you know if the DA's office provides  
12:17 2 any guidance to the hospital on reporting requirements?

12:17 3 A. No, ma'am.

12:17 4 Q. Has your office ever shared any information  
12:17 5 with hospital staff about crimes related to abortion?

12:17 6 A. I don't know.

12:17 7 Q. Are you familiar with SB 8?

12:17 8 A. No, ma'am.

12:17 9 Q. Is it common for the sheriff's office to get  
12:17 10 reports from CPS or child protective services or  
12:17 11 department of family protective services?

12:17 12 A. Yes, they -- they do call.

12:17 13 Q. Is it common for your office to report your  
12:17 14 investigation or your suspects to CPS?

12:18 15 A. Like child abuse, something like that?

12:18 16 Q. Yes.

12:18 17 A. Yes.

12:18 18 Q. And are you required -- your investigators are  
12:18 19 required to contact CPS?

12:18 20 A. Yes.

12:18 21 Q. If there's a -- I guess not probable cause, but  
12:18 22 sufficient reason?

12:18 23 A. Yes.

12:18 24 Q. Did the sheriff's office report Lizelle Herrera  
12:18 25 to CPS following her abortion?

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12:29 1 indicted, correct?

12:29 2 A. I was advised, yes.

12:29 3 Q. Yes. Do you recall -- do you recall who you  
12:29 4 were advised by, you personally, not the office?

12:29 5 A. I want to say Captain Fuentes.

12:29 6 Q. Did you have any discussions with DA Ramirez or  
12:29 7 any of the ADAs about the indictment?

12:29 8 A. Not at all.

12:29 9 Q. When Captain Fuentes advised you, was it in  
12:29 10 person or via phone call?

12:29 11 A. Person.

12:29 12 MR. NAVARRO: I'm going to object to the  
12:29 13 redundancy of the questions. A lot of this has already  
12:29 14 been asked and answered. I'm kind of letting it flow.

12:30 15 MS. GARZA: Yeah, I understand.

12:30 16 MR. NAVARRO: But it -- we really have had  
12:30 17 the same question multiple times now.

12:30 18 MS. GARZA: There's -- there's no problem.  
12:30 19 I -- I'm not disagreeing with you. It's just sometimes  
12:30 20 things come out, and then I have to go back, and I  
12:30 21 can't remember what I asked or didn't asked.

12:30 22 MR. NAVARRO: Yeah, but nothing has come  
12:30 23 out, I mean. He's asked -- he's --

12:30 24 MS. GARZA: No. That's what I mean.

12:30 25 MR. NAVARRO: -- responded to the same

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12:34 1 A. Because I trust Chief Molina.

12:34 2 Q. How often do you go to the jail just to kind of  
12:34 3 make rounds to see what's going on over there?

12:34 4 A. I go often. Once a month, because I trust  
12:34 5 Chief Molina and his captains.

12:34 6 Q. The jail in Rio Grande City, is that -- that's  
12:34 7 right next to the --

12:34 8 A. -- the sheriff --

12:34 9 Q. -- sheriff's office?

12:34 10 A. The sheriff's office, yes.

12:34 11 Q. Yeah. It's like the building next to it?

12:34 12 A. Yes.

12:34 13 Q. Did DA Ramirez contact you before Lizelle was  
12:34 14 in jail, was arrested?

12:34 15 A. Before?

12:34 16 Q. Yes.

12:34 17 A. No.

12:35 18 Q. Did DA Ramirez contact you while Lizelle was in  
12:35 19 custody?

12:35 20 A. He -- I think, yes, he did. When she posted  
12:35 21 bond, Mr. Ramirez called me -- I mean, text me, I  
12:35 22 believe, if Lizelle was already bond out. I said,  
12:35 23 "Yes. She'll be out in a few minutes." That's it.

12:35 24 Q. Okay. And we do have some of those text  
12:35 25 messages that were produced from Mr. Ramirez's phone.

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12:35 1 I'll go ahead and show you. This was previously  
12:35 2 labeled Plaintiff's Exhibit 36.

12:35 3 Are those the text messages that you're  
12:35 4 referring to, Sheriff?

12:35 5 A. The one in green?

12:35 6 Q. Yes.

12:35 7 A. Okay. "Good morning, Sheriff. Did Ms. Herrera  
12:36 8 bond out" -- yes.

12:36 9 Q. Okay. And then you advised that she was still  
12:36 10 in custody as of April 9th at 8 --

12:36 11 A. No. I advised him that she'll be out any  
12:36 12 minute.

12:36 13 Q. Okay. Well, looking at that next text, it  
12:36 14 says, "No. She's still in custody," correct?

12:36 15 A. Okay. Yes.

12:36 16 Q. Okay. And then I believe on the next page,  
12:36 17 it's a little bit later, you indicated that bond had  
12:36 18 been posted and she would be out in the next 15 minutes  
12:36 19 or so.

12:36 20 A. Okay. Yes. That's right.

12:36 21 Q. Okay. You just didn't remember all of them.

12:36 22 A. Yeah.

12:36 23 Q. No problem. Do you -- did you have any phone  
12:36 24 calls or discussions with DA Ramirez about Lizelle's  
12:36 25 arrest and bond being set?

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12:36 1 A. The bond, no, ma'am, no discussion.

12:36 2 Q. Do you know what he meant by, "It seems that  
12:36 3 we've stirred up a hornet's nest"?

12:36 4 A. No. What -- what my -- my thoughts were that  
12:37 5 because after the arrest, I received a lot -- I was  
12:37 6 receiving calls, calls, calls, calls, threats and all  
12:37 7 that. And I had to literally change the number for the  
12:37 8 sheriff's office for three days, because -- you know,  
12:37 9 let the local people know, because people were calling  
12:37 10 and calling me and --

12:37 11 Q. What -- what types of calls were you receiving?

12:37 12 A. People from out of town. Like that they were  
12:37 13 going to do a riot in front of my jail on Saturday  
12:37 14 morning.

12:37 15 Q. Okay. And then you said you also received  
12:37 16 threats via phone?

12:37 17 A. Yes.

12:37 18 Q. What kinds -- what kinds of threats are --

12:37 19 A. My -- my secretary would pick up the calls. I  
12:37 20 never pick up any calls. E-mails, I got a lot of  
12:37 21 e-mails, people get upset, I guess.

12:37 22 Q. Okay. So you do recall receiving e-mails, and  
12:37 23 at least your secretary was giving you updates or  
12:37 24 messages about what was coming in?

12:37 25 A. Because we had to change -- we had to change

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